

Increasing Efficiency Through Contact Center Automation

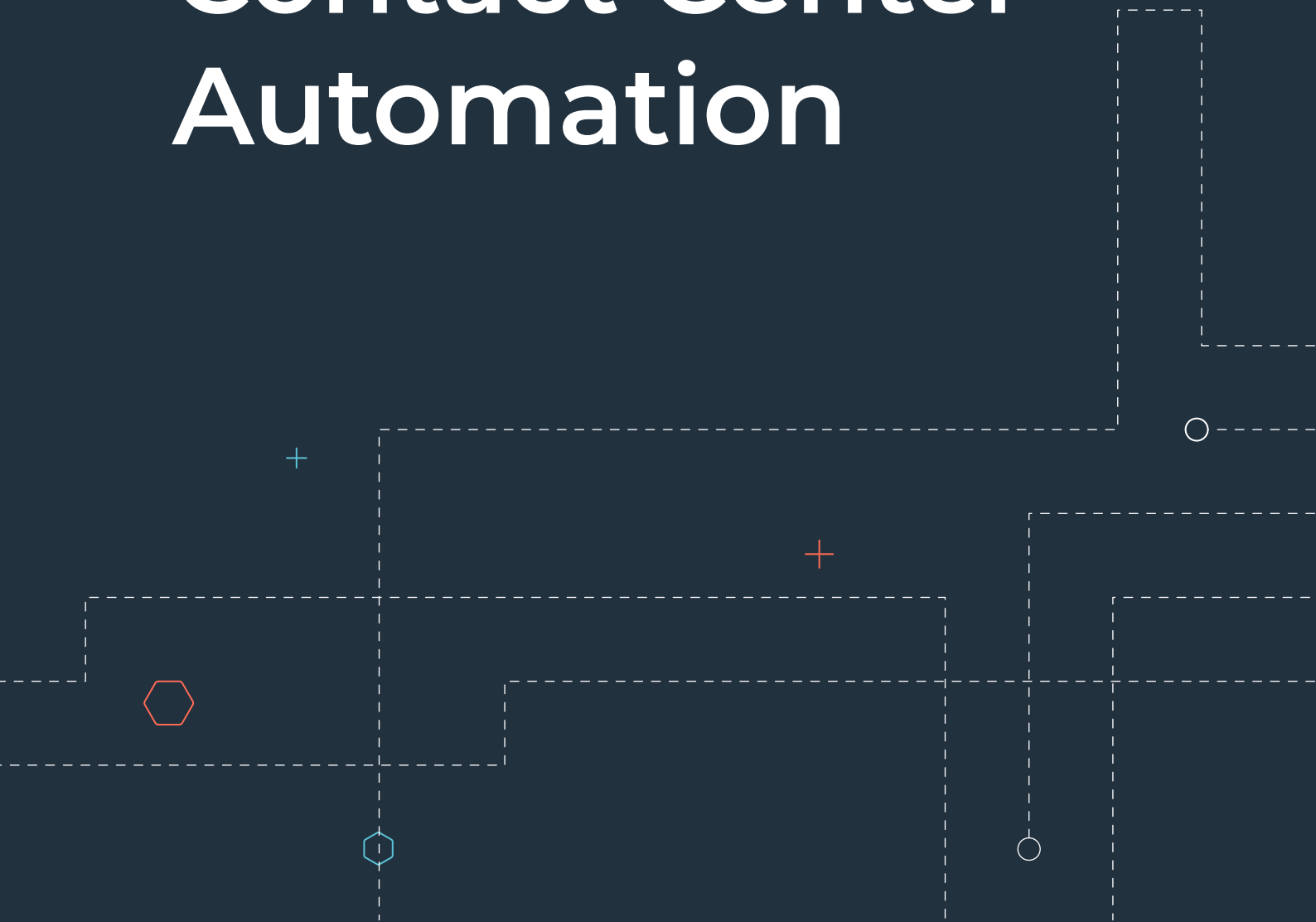




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Preface

Every company that strives for success needs a well-functioning contact center. It almost doesn't matter how great your company's products or services are if your contact center doesn't come up to scratch. In fact, a great, fast, efficient service can make or break your customers' experience and satisfaction with your company's offering.

It's no secret that contact centers are often one of the busiest departments in an organization. With continuous multitasking, decision making, serving clients, putting out fires, generating sales, and meeting customer needs, it's easy to get overwhelmed, affecting the quality of work and costing the company too much money.

I believe that in 2021, no contact center should be operating without some form of automation. Automation can do a lot of the work for you, saving you money, time, workforce numbers, and reducing mistakes and agent stress levels. The result is that you will either be able to reduce the size of your contact center or have the means to organize your team's work more efficiently.

In this ebook, I'll go through **8 ESSENTIAL TYPES OF CONTACT CENTER AUTOMATION** that you can apply in your contact center today.

Firstly, we will explore **call scheduling**, which will help you guarantee that no calls get forgotten.

Then, you will learn about **Interactive Voice Response**, the interactive menu at the start of a phone call that helps clients navigate and find the right department more easily.

Next up is **call routing**, which allows your contact center software to automatically transfer calls to selected processes, based on the criteria you specify.

After that, I'll introduce you to the world of **automated outbound dialing methods** - power, predictive, and outbound IVR - which will save you a significant percentage in terms of workforce numbers.

To maximize productivity even further, we'll then talk about how you can take advantage of the **Answering Machine Detection** feature so that your agents really do only spend time on the calls that matter.

We will also discuss ways in which you can **automate what happens after a call**. For example, you can send automated confirmation emails and SMS based on the outcome of the call with your client, or target your database with mass announcements.

Last but not least, we'll show you how to save your supervisors more time by generating and fine-tuning **daily reports** that they can automatically receive in their inbox every day.

Based on my 20 years of experience in building and managing contact centers, I can assure you that, with the right approach, most processes can be quickly optimized.

I hope this ebook will help you find the most suitable automation solutions to help boost your contact center's efficiency.



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Introduction

Contact centers can be stressful environments. With notoriously high staff turnover, ever-growing costs, and continually increasing customer expectations, keeping efficiency at an optimal level is definitely challenging.

Managers need to take responsibility for the overall performance and budget of the contact center, keeping costs low and customers satisfied. Supervisors have to continually jump between training agents and analyzing reports, while agents are required to take care of all types of customer queries throughout the day.

Handling all of this manually consumes significant time and resources, resulting in reduced efficiency. So why not save your workforce for the more complex projects that require a human touch? This is where automation comes into play.

By automating as many tasks as possible, your contact center will be able to save time, resources, costs and increase customer satisfaction. And as a result of this, your agents will be able to work on more meaningful, important tasks, thus helping to reduce agent burnout.

What Is Automation?

Automation is the idea of replacing manual labor with technology. When you utilize automation, you typically only need to spend time on setting the system up, after which it can run with little or no intervention. The tasks that previously needed humans to perform manually can now be fulfilled automatically.

Automation removes the time spent on administration and decision-making, and can run 24/7. While automation is doing its job, agents and the contact center managers can focus on different tasks. Automation, therefore, saves on workforce numbers, reduces costs, and often improves accuracy: after all, machines don't get tired, so the opportunity for mistakes is reduced. With the smart application of automation, you can offload mundane, repetitive tasks from employees, thus changing the nature of their jobs and the effectiveness of their activities.

In 2021, the list of ways you can utilize automation is endless. Applied correctly, you can not only increase efficiency but also improve customer satisfaction and enable self-service.

There are many potential uses for automation in contact centers. I collected some of the most essential types of contact center automation you can take advantage of, regardless of the industry your company operates in.

1. Call Scheduling

The first automation feature that can save significant time is call scheduling.

Call scheduling can be partly or wholly automated. A common use of call scheduling is when a client wants to be called back at a later time. In this case, the agent can simply select a date and time while on the call.

Alternatively, a callback time can be automatically assigned to the contact, for instance, when a client calls but nobody answers them, or when a machine dialer (more on this later) attempts to call a client without success. The time for when a callback is arranged can be scheduled based on your call scheduling settings. For example, the default time could be 4 hours for unavailable clients, and 2 hours if their incoming call is left unanswered.

Of course, if you set a range of availability hours for the contact (e.g. only call them between 4 pm to 7 pm), automation takes this into account and won't attempt to call them outside of these hours.

The next step is to call the client back.

If your contact center uses manual or preview dialing (that is, your agents can decide when calls start), the scheduled calls will appear on the computer screen in front of them, so they can see which clients were promised a callback.

This option already saves significant time, as agents don't need to remember or look up callbacks in an external calendar; search for the contact, manually type in a phone number, and so on.

With auto-dialing (power or predictive, more on this later), callbacks happen automatically at the scheduled time, saving even more time and manual labor.

In addition, leaving it up to a machine to start callbacks guarantees that no calls are missed, and clients aren't called at an inappropriate time.

2. Inbound IVR & its Innovations

'For English, please press ONE.'

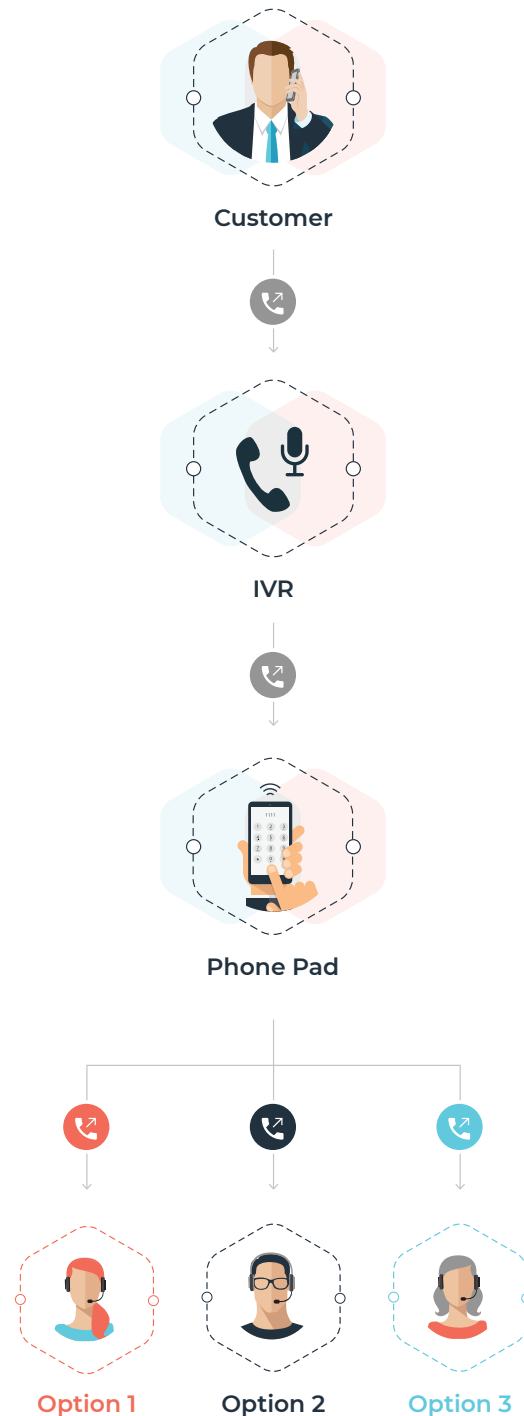
Can you imagine a modern-day contact center without a well-established IVR menu?

IVR (short for Interactive Voice Response) is an automated phone system that can interact with your callers, gather information from them, or route calls to the appropriate agents. The agent doesn't need to be present while the caller is in an IVR menu.

An IVR can play pre-recorded messages, allowing you to choose from different menu options for each button on the dial pad, and then further sub-menus after that.

Callers can navigate between the different options using their dial-pad (DTMF) or Google's TTS/STT solution (text-to-speech and speech-to-text). The latter allows callers to navigate using voice commands, which is faster and more convenient than having to open the dial pad on their phones.

Anyone who has ever called a contact center knows that they are directed to a dedicated agent after selecting the number for the right department or issue. However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.



A few examples of Inbound IVR use cases that can improve service availability and efficiency:

- Use a pre-recorded message to inform callers about reduced service, e.g. outside office hours or on holidays
- Save agents time by having callers listen to obligatory disclaimer messages (e.g. This call is being recorded)
- Collect payments real-time with a payment processor, such as our VCC Live Pay feature
- Set up a Frequently Asked Questions menu so callers can find the answer to their questions more quickly, without having to wait for a real-life agent
- Record customer feedback so that you know what needs to be improved

With VCC Live, our drag-and-drop interface allows you to set up complex, advanced IVR flows. Our platform makes it easy to create flows and easy-to-navigate menus. By uploading any sound file to the IVR sound library, you can even customize prompts and pre-recorded messages.

Having an IVR menu in place can help you with manual or automatic call distribution. In other words, you can route callers to the right agent or menu, which can significantly improve first call resolution. I will tell you more about this in the next section.

3. Call Routing

Call routing places incoming calls in a queue and transfers (or routes) them to an agent or a self-service menu based on specific criteria. Call routing systems are also known as Automatic Call Distributors (ACD).

In call routing, inbound calls are distributed automatically, with the function being triggered by various factors, such as agents' availability, language preferences, the caller's phone number, call volume, client history, department, the current date, or the time of day.

Call routing also allows you to prevent previously blocked contacts from reaching your contact center. With a so-called Robinson list, you can add unwanted contacts that the system will automatically block, thus preventing phone pranksters, harassment, fraud, and so on. Please note that you will be required to take legal responsibility for blocked calls.

To make the most of call routing automation, consider the skills of your agents and the context of your incoming calls. An optimized call routing system can improve your First Call Resolution (FCR) as well as the productivity of your team.

Think about the reason behind your incoming calls:

- Are they existing clients or a new prospect?
- Are they calling from your own country or from abroad?
- Can you direct the caller to a self-service option?

Pairing up call routing with an IVR menu is common and highly recommended. By providing a voice menu as soon as a call starts, the client can be prompted with different options to choose from, such as the department they are hoping to reach.

You can save a significant amount of time by letting clients pre-select the reason for their call, and even have them type in information such as their client ID or tracking code using their dial pad. This means that once they are connected with an agent the call can move forward in a far quicker and more efficient manner.

A large percentage of calls can be sent to self-service options. In other words, instead of connecting the caller with an agent, they get all the information they need from a pre-recorded message. With tools like VCC Live Pay, clients can even pay their debt through their phones without any need for human interaction.

Such self-service allows you to decrease call volume and spare valuable human resources. The result is that your agents can focus on where they are needed most.

4. Automated Dialing Methods

The purpose of an auto-dialer is to automatically call phone numbers from a predetermined database, which you can upload manually or extract from a CRM system.

Auto-dialers can significantly speed up any outbound campaigns.

First of all, there is no need for a human being to search for contacts, make decisions on whom to call, dial numbers, and wait while the phone rings. With this alone, you can already save a great deal of time (saving 5 seconds per call really does add up when you are trying to contact hundreds of clients a day!).

Secondly, and more importantly, the dialer only connects a call to an agent when the recipient answers the phone. Not only do you eliminate the administrative part of making calls, but your contact center won't be wasting a single moment on unanswered calls.

There are two types of automated dialing methods: **Power** or **Progressive Dialing** and **Predictive Dialing**.

Power Dialing starts precisely the same amount of calls as you have agents available.

Predictive Dialing takes automation a step further by introducing machine learning. It is based on algorithms that work with factors such as the quality of the database and the behavioral pat-

40 minutes / hour

abandoned call rate under 3%

TWICE as many calls

MAX number of customers

waiting time a few seconds

terns of contacts. Because it's expected that not every contact will pick up a call from an unknown caller, the predictive dialer starts more calls than the number of agents available, maximizing the efficiency and productivity of your contact center.

Automating your campaign with a predictive dialer can **save you at least 40% on your workforce numbers**.

While a predictive dialer is more effective for mass outbound campaigns, there is a small chance that some calls may be abandoned, which is not the case for the other dialing methods. For example, the machine might predict that only 4 people out of 6 will answer the call, but in reality, 5 people pick up the phone.

The solution is to take as much control over the settings as possible so that you can fine-tune them along the way. With VCC Live, for example, you can set up every parameter to guarantee efficiency, and you also access pre-created templates tailored to your industry and the nature of your campaign.

In addition, the next time the dialer calls the abandoned contact, the system will automatically lock in an agent for them, so the contact won't be abandoned again.

You can learn more about making the most of your predictive dialer [in our free VCC Live Academy course](#). In the next section, you will learn about outbound IVR, another automated dialing method that virtually eliminates the need for an agent.

VCC Live's predictive dialer enables **40+ minutes of active talk time/hour** and keeps the **abandoned call rate below 3%**. Many of our clients have experienced great results since implementing our solution.

The loan company, [Provident](#), for example, saw an immediate **5% increase in their productivity** upon implementing our predictive dialer. [Studio Moderna](#), a European telemarketing business, managed to increase their **active talk time by 20%** in their outbound campaign. The insurance company, [4Life Direct](#), increased their **agent talk time from 20 to 38 minutes/hour**.

You can find many more [customer success stories](#) on our website.

5. Outbound IVR

Meet the innovative combination of an IVR menu and outbound automated dialing technology!

Outbound IVR, or OIVR, is an automatic dialing mode used to establish connections between customers and the contact center software, without involving an agent.

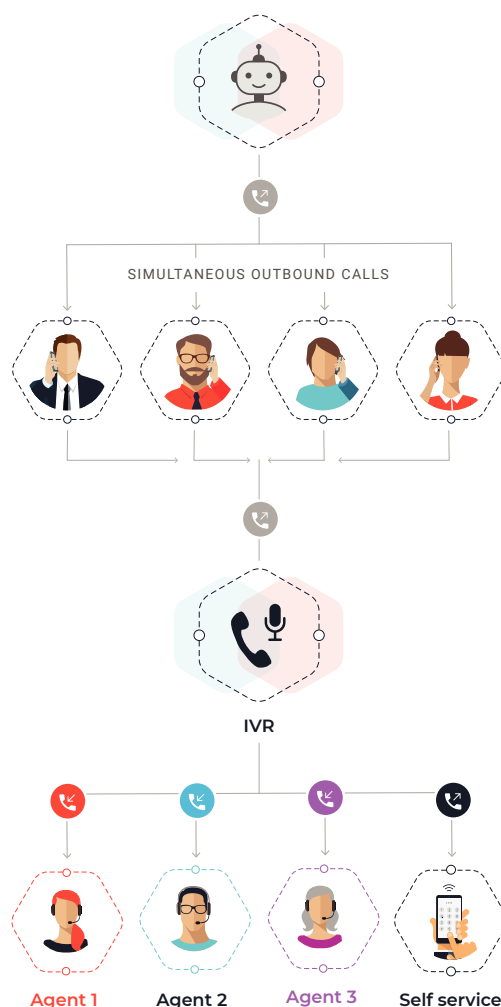
An OIVR call rings on your clients' phone, just like any regular call. When the client answers the phone call, the system automatically transfers it to a specific process.

In many ways, OIVR can serve a similar purpose to an inbound IVR menu. You can inform clients of changes, and, if needed, connect them to an agent.

The main difference between IVR and OIVR is in their use. As the name suggests, OIVR is used for outbound calls, so clients usually aren't expecting the call.

An Outbound IVR can be a great tool for any outbound campaign that requires little to no human interaction. Let the machine do the work reading long, often boring, or repetitive texts aloud while your agents work on something more meaningful.

If a prospect or client does want to connect with an agent, the outcome of the call will likely be more successful because they already agreed to the conversation. And as a result, agents will not have to deal with angry call receivers on the phone, helping to substantially reduce agent burnout.



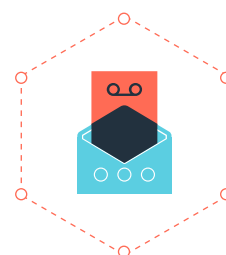
What are some use cases for Outbound IVR in your contact center?

- Inform clients about a new update in the company's regulations or terms and conditions.
- Collect outstanding debt by using a real-time payment collection system, such as VCC Live Pay, to make it convenient and easy for your customers to pay.
- Offer upsells to existing customers. Again, they can pay using a real-time payment collection system.
- Qualify cold leads. For example, you can record a message, checking with the client if it is a good time to talk. If the lead is happy to talk, they can be connected to a live agent. A great way for agents to avoid rude prospects.
- Send an automated voice broadcast as a delivery reminder, and let customers confirm with their voice or dial pad whether they will be home at the time of the delivery, thus saving time and travel costs for your delivery team
- Use it for political campaigns and market research surveys. Recipients can answer questions using their voice or dial pad.
- Similarly, you can use OIVR to ask for feedback on your contact center. Clients can leave voice feedback and, for example, rate your services from one to five.

6. Answering Machine Detection

AMD (short for Answering Machine Detection) is used to automatically determine whether a call has been answered by an answering machine or a human.

When your contact center uses auto-dialing methods, the main goals are speed and efficiency. When a call runs to voicemail, the auto-dialer tends to consider it 'answered' and connects it to an agent or plays the outbound IVR message, wasting time and resources. Answering Machine Detection is used to minimize such calls.



The AMD detects whether the call is being answered by a machine rather than a human being, and if so it automatically terminates the call or routes it to a process of your choice. You can choose to leave a pre-recorded message and/or automatically assign such calls a callback.

With this feature enabled you can also improve your conversion rate in the following ways:

1. If no time is being wasted on listening to pre-recorded answering machine messages, your agents can focus on available clients.
2. By automatically leaving them a voicemail, your clients can also decide to call you back when it's convenient for them.

VCC Live is able to detect two-thirds of calls answered by a voicemail system.

Many of VCC Live's clients use AMD with great success. For example, [4finance](#), one of Europe's largest digital consumer lending groups, managed to reduce the number of answer machines their debt collection agents connected to **by 30%.**

7. SMS and Email Confirmations

Customers these days actively expect you to tailor your service to their needs by offering as many different communication channels as possible.

Even if you are making most of your important communications with your customers over the phone, **take advantage of other channels for automated follow-ups.**

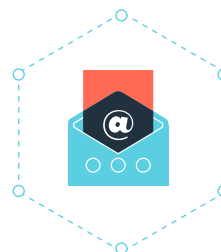
With VCC Live, sending event-based text messages and emails automatically, for example, is effortless.



Create multiple pre-written emails and text messages and link them to different call outcomes. For example, whenever an agent chooses the disposition 'Purchase Successful' to terminate a call, have it trigger a confirmation message that contains the details of the purchase.

Alternatively, you can send clients a summary of the phone conversation, or a confirmation email. You don't need to write a separate message for each client: you can use placeholders for each piece of customized information you have (from client name to email address, all the way to their unique tracking code), and the software will automatically replace it with the client's information.

Sending automated emails and text messages saves you a great deal of time because you only need to write them once. Agents don't need to find the email, fill out details in the email and send it to a client manually.



Another great use of automated messages is for mass announcements. Here the sky is the limit: you can use this for sales, marketing, simple announcements, even political campaigns.

There is no need to send it to every one of your contacts. You can tailor recipients based on any category: demographic data, date or amount of purchase, the outcome of the last call, and so on.

8. Automatic Daily Exports

One of the big time-wasters in a contact center supervisor's daily life is having to constantly find, collect, download, and analyze reports and statistics. The bigger the contact center, the more complex this task becomes.

Automating the generation of daily reports saves time, and also **helps reduce the continuous brain power and stress that forgetting to check particular information creates.**



In addition, by automating the export of the daily report that is generated, you can easily go back to how things were in the past, cross-referencing data, analyzing figures, and drawing conclusions **even if you're offline.**

Staying on top of data is crucial, especially during large-volume campaigns, where even a 1% change in direction can mean a great amount of money and time lost or saved.

With VCC Live's software, you can create multiple export templates, fully customizing them to display exactly what you want to see under what conditions, and also who should receive the daily email with the exported Excel file.

This is especially useful for the departments at your company who might not need (or have) access to your contact center software, but for whom the export file can be useful to calculate profit, or salaries and bonuses.

Having the auto-generated export at your fingertips, or directly sending it from the software to the appropriate department can boost efficiency at your company while saving time on repetitive administration.

III. Conclusion

Automating as many parts of your contact center as possible is one of the best ways to cut costs and save time. With the use of a predictive dialer alone, **you can save up to 40% on your workforce numbers**, and the more automation features you apply from our ebook, **the higher this number will get**.

Saving on your workforce numbers can enable your contact center to serve a large number of customers with just a handful of agents, or allow your agents to focus on the **more meaningful tasks** that require a human touch.

Contact center professionals face many challenges on a daily basis. Their work is important, but often the amount of administrative tasks they need to complete takes their time away from focusing on decision making, agent training and retention, and other important duties. By automating the repetitive tasks in their day-to-day work, **supervisors get to focus on tasks that truly move the needle**.

Both agents and supervisors are prone to burnout. Automation processes can reduce this issue by removing tasks that make agents feel like they are slaves to their job.

While not all our advice may be applicable for your particular business, we're confident that if you apply most of these solutions, your contact center efficiency will improve like never before.

Are you on the hunt for a cutting-edge contact center solution with a wide range of innovative automation possibilities like those detailed in this guide?

Contact us and schedule a demo today!



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VCC Live is a Cloud Contact Center Software provider for companies dealing with wide-ranging customer communications through a variety of channels, including phone, email, chat, and social media. The company is based in Budapest-Hungary, has clients in more than 50 countries, and serves over 10,000 operators globally. It also works with 20 international telecommunication partners. Contact VCC Live for a personalized deployment plan to move your contact center to the cloud!

